

Field Marshaling 201

This class is intended as a primer on how to be the marshal-in-charge of a moderate- to large-sized event. It assumes that the individuals taking the class are (or will become) well-grounded in their own disciplines; specific questions about rules in different disciplines should be directed to marshals in those areas.

1. Planning the event

- a. Communicate with the principals.
 - i. Autocrat
 1. What types of activities he or she would like to see?
 2. Time constraints such as courts, lunch break.
 3. Will there be prizes for the tournaments/contests? If so, who is to provide them?
 - ii. Dignitaries
- b. Scout the site.
 - i. Keep in mind that the activities you can offer depend on the restrictions of the site itself.
 1. For example: Is there enough room for horses (and if you don't know the requirements, you need to bring an equestrian marshal with you to the site)? Does it allow live steel for thrown weapons?
 - ii. View the site with an eye toward what it will be like under possible adverse weather conditions (blazing sun, heavy rain, light snow).
 - iii. Watch for hazards that can affect how you will be able to lay out list fields and the like. Take special note of holes in the ground, uneven terrain, poison ivy, hornet nests.
- c. Recruit your discipline marshals and staff.
 - i. Make sure your discipline marshals understand the wishes of the autocrat and dignitaries.
 - ii. Appraise your discipline marshals of the general site layout and any relevant considerations.
- d. Communicate with the field staff.
 - i. Make sure you chat with the event MOL or ensure the relevant discipline marshals do so.
 1. Why? Veteran MOLs can be a huge asset in helping a tournament run smoothly, even with inexperienced marshals. Veteran marshals can help a novice MOL keep a tournament straight. The point is, the complexity of the tournament or shoot or whatever needs to be a good match for the experience of your field staff.
 2. Know what time the MOL is planning on arriving. You can't start authorizations without one.
 - ii. Will waterbearers be present? A chiurgeon?
- e. Design your scenarios.
 - i. Take into account a variety of factors.
 1. Wishes of the principals
 2. Weather
 3. Available time
 4. Likely participants

- ii. Keep in mind, no one likes standing around.
 - iii. Have a backup plan.
- f. Publicize
 - i. Well-attended events are much more fun than poorly-attended ones.
 - ii. As MIC your primary job is to make the event as safe as possible and make sure Kingdom and Society rules are followed. Your second most important job, though, is to work to make the event as much fun as possible for everyone. That means helping to generate excitement for an event is partly your responsibility.
- 2. Setting up the event
 - a. Make sure you have enough help.
 - i. Ask your marshals and MITs arrive early.
 - ii. Check in with all of your discipline marshals as early as possible. Make sure they have enough help to conduct the activities they have planned.
 - iii. Keep in mind that complex set-ups such as large list fields, archery shoots, or equestrian arenas are best erected the day before. You really will not have time the morning of an event.
 - b. Safety zones
 - i. Talk with your discipline marshals, make sure you understand the requirements.
 - ii. Have on-hand some means of delineating those safety zones. Those markers should have a period appearance.
 - iii. Remember that rapier and heavy fighters can be in safety zones only if fully armored as they would be if fighting.
 - iv. If you have marshals from different disciplines taking the class, this is a good time to ask them to speak up and describe the basic space and safety zone requirements of their areas of expertise
- 3. Running/managing the event
 - a. What to bring to the event
 - i. Your personal gear: watch, writing utensils, full set of the rules, safety goggles
 - ii. Spare marshal staves and tabards
 - iii. Spare safety goggles if there will be combat archery
 - b. Be nice to your field staff.
 - c. Inspections
 - i. Can be the most contentious part of the day
 - 1. "This is what I always have worn" or "I've always used this bow" is not good enough.
 - 2. Emphasize that the rules are there for safety.
 - 3. Be reasonable, but be firm. Rules are rules, they are not optional.
 - 4. Also make sure that your marshals understand that there are no "house rules" or "local conventions". They must enforce the rules as written.
 - d. Start on time.
 - i. Manage authorizations.
 - ii. Coordinate with dignitaries.
 - e. Managing participants
 - i. Your demeanor sets the tone.
 - 1. Polite, calm, self-assured
 - 2. As a marshal you are the voice of reason on the field.
 - ii. You have to know the rules.

1. And one of those rules is that you have a copy of the rules available at the site.
- iii. Be clear to the participants.
 1. Clarity is especially important when dealing with fighters. Fatigue, overheating dim the wits very quickly.
 2. Ensuring everyone knows the conventions for the day's shoots/combats/whatever, knows the schedule will reduce the likelihood of problems later.
- iv. Keep tempers in check.
 1. Especially important in melee.
 2. Take breaks, talk to the fighters, remind them that they are all friends.
- v. Remember that rank does not confer the ability to circumvent the rules.
 1. This can be the trickiest part of marshaling an event.
 2. As when dealing with any individual, be polite. Explain the rule. Explain your decision. In the final analysis, however, you must enforce the rules for everyone.
- f. Remember that the MIC has the final word on any dispute in any martial discipline on site. The MIC's decision may be overruled only by the Crown, Kingdom Earl Marshal, or relevant discipline Deputy Marshal if they happen to be on site.
 - i. For this reason, many MICs, particularly of a large event, elect not to be a discipline marshal.
 - ii. As MIC you should overrule one of your discipline marshals only if you have a really, really good reason.
 - iii. Disputes that reach the MIC level for arbitration should be included in your event report.
- g. Managing spectators
 - i. Keep an eye on the safety zones.
 - ii. Waterbearers and heralds have a way of encroaching in combat areas.
4. After the contests are done
 - a. Publicly thank your field staff (MOLs, waterbearers, chiurgeons) in court.
 - b. Check in with your discipline marshals.
 - i. Did they have any problems?
 1. Safety issues (broken blades, stray arrows, injuries)
 2. Troublesome or belligerent individuals (You need to get the SCA name of these people and include them in your report.)
 - ii. Remind them to file their event reports within 10 days. Ask for a copy.
 - iii. Make sure they have help for cleanup.
 - c. File your event report within 10 days.
 - i. This is not optional — the report must be filed within that time span.
 - ii. Besides, you'll forget what happened if you don't do it then, anyway.
 - d. Thank-you notes are a nice touch.
 - i. This may be more relevant for a discipline marshal, but if a group makes an effort to bring a large number of people to your event, send them a thank-you note. Even an electronic one is fine. It's a nice thing to do and those groups will remember the gesture; they'll be more likely to return the following year.